



# Mystery fumes seep into JD homes

Consultant says culprit is some sort of solvent

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – Neighbors in Southwest John Day are complaining of noxious fumes emerging in their basements.

City officials – including the John Day police chief, fire chief and public works director – were regrouping in the area this week to try to pinpoint the cause and extent of the problem.

Some neighbors just began smelling the strong odor in the recent days, but the problem first was reported two months ago at the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District building on Canyon Boulevard.

City Manager Peggy Gray said the city has just received a copy of a preliminary report from an industrial hygienist

hired by SWCD. It indicated the source of the odor is a solvent.

“It’s not a petroleum product,” she said. She said the hygienist is coming to town Wednesday to do more testing and meet with officials.

Jason Kehrberg, SWCD manager, said the problem cropped up at the agency’s building in March – first as a faint, occasional whiff of odor, and then became more persistent.

“It built up over time to where it was almost unbearable,” he said.

The staff checked the crawl space for signs of some kind of leak, and opened all the windows and doors to air out the offices despite the chilly weather.

“People had to wear coats to work,” he said.

The agency notified John Day police and fire officials, and called the propane company to check for leaks.

A contractor for the nearby Education Service District construction project referred Kehrberg to an industrial hygienist, who took air samples and recommended some venting in the crawl space as a temporary fix. The odor was identified as a solvent, but the source remains unknown.

Kehrberg said the hygienist took soil samples to see if anything might have been dumped on the property, but that wasn’t the case.

He said with the venting, the air quality in the office space is meeting standards again.

The hygienist returned about two weeks ago and took more samples, Kehrberg said. He found the problem had diminished, “but it’s still there in the crawl space.”

The agency may need to install more permanent venting to control the problem, Kehrberg said.

He said he’d been told solvents usu-

ally dissipate over time.

“We were hoping it was localized, and would just dissipate,” he said.

However, new reports in the neighborhood indicate the substance is on the move.

Rob Raschio, who lives on Southwest 4th Street, said his family noticed the strong odor about four days ago in their basement.

Thinking there might be an oil leak, he called a heating oil company to check it out and was told the problem was also occurring at other nearby homes – and that it was not heating oil.

Raschio said the smell is noxious, adding that “some people were getting migraine headaches from it.”

Raschio’s hoping people will report the problem and share information, so someone can figure out the source and extent of the problem.

“Whatever the problem is, we need to know what’s going on,” he said.

# Ranchers ridin’ into town

OCA schedules midyear meeting in John Day

Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – The Oregon Cattlemen’s Association is coming to Grant County next month.

The organization will hold its midyear event Wednesday-Friday, June 10-12 at the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day.

The theme is “Branded.”

“The theme rings strong in the ranching community as cowboys and cowgirls are dedicated to taking care of their land, community, and animals,” said Kayli Hanley, communications director. “That is something that will never change. It is their brand.”

The program will feature presenters from across the state and as far away as Washington, D.C. Topics will include agribusiness, wolves, endangered species and private land acquisition, as well as updates on political issues, the Beef Council, and other matters.

In addition to the presentations, there will be a golf scramble, a local FFA barbecue lunch, a Young Cattlemen’s Committee fun night, and dinner meetings.

In a release, the association noted its deep roots in agriculture, dating back more than 100 years as a voice for ranchers across Oregon. Started with 12 cowboys concerned about providing quality beef, the association now boasts more than 2,000 members.

For more information, visit [orcattle.com](http://orcattle.com) or call 503-361-8941. May 31 is the registration deadline.

# Man held in Dayville stabbing

Blue Mountain Eagle

DAYVILLE – A Dayville man who offered a friend a place to stay the night was stabbed early Sunday morning, the Grant County Sheriff’s Office reported.

The investigation indicated that Michael Wenzel allowed a friend to stay at his residence on South Fork Road.

Sheriff Glenn Palmer said that about 4 a.m. the friend broke through a bedroom door and attacked Wenzel with a butcher knife. Wenzel was stabbed in the forehead before he could fend the man off and, with help from his girlfriend, disarm him.

Monty Smith was apprehended and taken to Blue Mountain Hospital and then to the Grant County Jail. On Monday, he was transferred to the Juniper Ridge Acute Care Facility in John Day, Palmer said.

Palmer said Wenzel’s forehead cut did not require medical attention.

The case has been forwarded to the district attorney, the sheriff said.



# Buddies catch a big mess of fish at Enright ponds

Blue Mountain Eagle

**M**T. VERNON – The fish were biting and the company was good at Gail and Shirley Enright’s Mt. Vernon ranch May 1.

Members of the John Day Elks Lodge and other volunteers paired up with invited students from Grant School District No. 3 schools for the third annual Elks Fishing Buddy Derby.

When young Sebastian Hodge was asked by Bill Fields how many fish he caught, the reply was, “twenty-eleven dozen.”

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Left: Angler AJ Dickens measures a fish he caught, Marilyn Raymond standing by to help.

Top: Young anglers had assistance from Elks fishing buddies at a May 1 derby event held at Gail and Shirley Enright’s Mt. Vernon ranch.

Contributed photos  
Tom Winters

## STUDENT ART



**Rebecca Batease**  
Grade 10  
Grant Union Junior-Senior High School  
Teacher: JJ Collier

# MNF projects draw world travelers

Travelers take home lessons from woods

By **Scotta Callister**  
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY – Local foresters and land managers went into export mode last week, providing lessons in restoration and collaboration to a contingent of visitors who will take the information home to 14 foreign countries.

The visitors were in Grant County May 6-8 as part of the International Seminar on Forest Landscape Restoration. The seminar began April 27 with programs and coursework in Portland, followed by a field trip to Bend and then John Day.

The group leaves Portland for home this Wednesday.

In Grant County, they visited the Camp Creek restoration area, the Marshall Devine restoration and harvest



The Eagle/Scotta Callister

International tour participants gather around Brian Cochran, Tribes restoration ecologist, as he describes the scope of work to restore mine tailing fields and a healthy river course on the Oxbow Conservation Area.

project, and the Oxbow Conservation Area.

The latter, owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, gave them a closeup look at a major river

relocation project, one that includes a stretch of relocated channel and extensive work to recover mine tailing fields.

It was an eye-opener for many of the 19 participants, described as mid-career

land managers from nations including Malawi, China, Brazil and Philippines.

“We don’t have this kind of restoration,” said Silvia Lopez, a biologist from Guatemala, noting the extensive work at the Oxbow.

While some parts of the project looked too costly for projects back home, she said, she felt there were good ideas to take back and try. She said much of the challenge in her area is coping with impacts from intensive agriculture and also the loss of habitat to commercial uses and housing.

Samuel Kofi Nyame, a participant from Ghana, said the tour offered good information about “the basic principles of restoration – these are things we can take home.”

He was intrigued by the collaborative effort of many of the projects, and felt it would help to involve “the people outside the bureaus” in the work.

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